ground infrastructure, aircraft type and other technical parameters. Some of the international airports do handle more movements than handled by AAI at Mumbai and Delhi airports.

Regional Air Services by IA

1370. SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Indian Airlines is looking for regional flights in Maharashtra, Jharkhand, U.P. and Karnataka in collaboration with the respective States; and

(b) if so, what is the response of the State Governments for operating regional flights by Indian Airlines with their collaboration?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Alliance Air, subsidiary of Indian Airlines has held preliminary discussions in this regard with the Governments of Maharashtra, Karnataka and U.P. Indian Airlines has recently submitted a Letter of Intent (LOI) against an advertisement issued by Government of Jharkhand for operation of air services to/ from Ranchi and Jamshedpur under a subsidy scheme.

Growth Rate of Air Passengers at Madurai Airport

1371. SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) what is the growth rate of air passengers at Madurai airport;

(b) what new facilities have been provided at Madurai airport for the benefit of the passengers; and

(c) what is the stage of expansions proposed at Madurai airport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) The annual growth rate of air passengers at Madurai airport during the last three years was 21.4%.

(b) and (c) various upgradation/development works such as extension and strengthening of existing runway, expansion of apron to increase parking capacity and provision of additional taxiway, ground

lighting facilities and associated facilities have been initiated by Airports Authority of Indian (AAI) at Madurai airport. AAI has also plans for construction of a new terminal building complex alongwith modern passengers amenities to handle 500 passengers at a time.

Decongestion of Passenger/Cargo Traffic at Madurai Airport

1372. SHRI R. SHUNMUGASUNDARAM: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the unused airport at Vagaikulam near Tuticorin will be put to use in order to decongest the passenger and cargo traffic at Madurai airport; and

(b) whether there is any proposal to start reusing the Salem air strip in Tamil Nadu?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Decision to make operation an unused airport depends *inter-alia* on the existence of firm commitments from scheduled airlines to start air services. Airports Authority of India has not received any proposal from airlines to operate scheduled passenger/cargo service through Vagaikulam airstrip near Tuticorin and the airport at Salem.

Improvement of Infrastructure of Indian Airlines

1373. DR. K. MALAISAMY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) how does Indian Airlines compare with private airlines in India and air India with other International Airways in terms of safety, cost effectiveness, technology and service;

(b) what are the major hurdles for Indian Airlines to match with other Airlines;

(c) whether it is a system failure or human failure or both; and

(d) what are the major steps proposed or taken to improve in terms of infrastructure, manpower and management?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) The performance of the national